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ABSTRACT

Five well-known spelling/reading lists were analyzed to create a new list of high-priority spelling words. Words found on at least three of the five lists were included to create Kinsey's 119 Most Common Words list. (Tables are included showing lists on which the words appear.) (TJ)

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Kinsey's One Hundred Nineteen Priority Words for Spelling Vocabularies

by
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Agreement is universal among educators that spelling is a basic subject, a necessary requisite to students in developing their written expression skills. As a basic skill subject, spelling has been an intregal part of the elementary school curriculum since the beginning of American education in the Colonial days. This historical fact is evidence that spelling always has been a prime skill subject, and because it has been a cornerstone in the elementary curriculum, researchers have developed variable word lists considered to be important spelling vocabularies. That is, several lists of words have been compiled by researchers using different methodologies covering a wide variety of written material for the purpose of ascertaining frequently used words they felt were necessary for students to commit to memory.

Cursory inspection of these lists revealed that there were common words to different lists. Inclusion of words on any list means they are prominent having special significance, and probably should be committed to spelling memories at appropriate times in the curriculum. The assumption was made that if words were found on multiple lists, they should qualify for an even higher learning priority in the judgement of your authors. Therefore, a tabulation and inspection of these words were made to find the commonality of the words on five lists, for the purpose of developing a priorized list of words from high frequency lists. Given this information, teachers could ensure the inclusion of these words in their spelling programs, to facilitate their students' written communication abilities.

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PROCEDURES AND FINDINGS

Five well-known spelling/reading lists were analyzed in this study. The lists used were: (1) Dolch's 220 Basic Sight Vocabulary (1942), (2) Fitzgerald's Master Demon List of 222 Words (1941), (3) Horn's First 100 Words in Order of Frequency (1926), (4) Johnson's One Hundred Words Most Often Misspelled (1976), (5) Rinsland's First 252 Words of Highest Frequency (1945). These high frequency words (894 total) found in written materials were examined to determine the frequency these words appeared on these lists.

The procedure included the comparison of the above lists to each other. As each list was compared to other lists, the word frequencies were tabulated by listing all words that were found common to each list used in the study. A final list was then derived by tabulating the words found common to all five lists. A tabulation of words was also made of words found to be common to four of the lists, three lists, two lists, and those appearing on only one list. An arbitrary criterion was established for words to qualify for KINSEY'S MOST COMMON WORDS. Words would have to appear on a minimum of three out of five lists for inclusion on KINSEY'S list.

Results indicated that of the 894 words from all five lists, only nineteen words (Table 1) were common to all five lists (Kinsey 1977). It seems evident that these nineteen words have the highest utility value for spelling students and should be taught at the earliest time.

INSERT TABLE 1

Thirty-five words (Table 2) were found to be common in four of the five lists (Kinsey 1977). Commonality to four lists make these thirty-five of high significant utility value to spelling students, and should be introduced very early in spelling programs.

INSERT TABLE 2

Sixty-five words (Table 3) were found to be common to three lists (Kinsey 1977), and have important utility value for students.

INSERT TABLE 3

Words common to at least three lists number 119 (Table 4) (Kinsey 1977), and are quite significant having high utility value. Thus the implication for

INSERT TABLE 4

teachers is that these high priority words should definitely be included in spelling programs for elementary students. Your authors also feel that KINSEY'S 119 MOST COMMON WORDS should be taught no later than the first few months of the second grade, if second grade is the first formal spelling experience for students.

Further analysis revealed that thirteen per cent or 117 words were common to two lists while twenty-three per cent or 210 words appeared on only one list. It may be concluded that these words are not of highest utility value, but would have moderate value in all spelling programs.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this project was to determine the frequency with which words appeared on five spelling/reading lists so a priority list could be devised. The assumption was made that words appearing most frequently would be of great value to children if introduced early in their spelling programs because facility to spell these words would facilitate children's written communication abilities. Thus, five spelling/reading word lists were compared totalling 894 words. An arbitrary criterion was established: a word appearing on three out of five lists would be considered of high enough importance to be in a special category which was named KINSEY'S 119 MOST COMMON WORDS.

The value of priorizing or highlighting certain words in spelling programs is apparent, precendentially established, and easily understood. Of course, common sense suggests these 119 most common words found by Kinsey should be taught to children early in their spelling programs since these words have special significance. However, common sense also suggests that the remaining 775 words retain their unique importance, and should be taught to elementary students before they depart for junior high school.

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TABLE 1

Words Common to Five Lists

Words	DOLCH	FITZGERALD	HORN	JOHNSON	RINSLAND
an	X	X	X	X	X
and	X	X	X	X	X
before	X	X	X	X	X
for	X	X	X	X	X
from	X	X	X	X	X
here	X	X	X	X	X
him	X	X	X	X	X
know	X	X	X	X	X
like	X	X	X	X	X
our	X	X	X	X	X
some	X	X	X	X	X
there	X	X	X	X	X
they	X	X	X	X	X
to	X	X	X	X	X
very	X	X	X	X	X
were	X	X	X	X	X
when	X	X	X	X	X
with	X	X	X	X	X
would	X	X	X	X	X

TABLE 2
Words Common to Four Lists

Words	DOLCH	FITZGERALD	HORN	JOHNSON	RINSLAND
about	X	X	X		X
again	X	X		X	X
am	X	X	X		X
are	X	X	X		X
can	X	X	X		X
good	X	X	X		X
got	X	X	X		X
had	X	X	X		X
has	X	X	X		X
have	X	X	X		X
he	X	X	X		X
her	X	X	X		X
his	X	X	X		X
how	X	X	X		X
I	X	X	X		X
it	X	X	X		X
just	X	X	X		X
made	X	X	X		X
make	X	X	X		X
much	X	X	X		X
my	X	X	X		X
now	X	X	X		X
on	X	X	X		X
one	X	X	X		X
out	X	X	X		X
please	X	X	X		X
the	X	X	X		X
them	X	X	X		X
two	X	X	X		X
think	X	X	X		X
we	X	X	X		X
well	X	X	X		X
will	X	X	X		X
you	X	X	X		X
your	X	X	X		X

TABLE 3
Words Common to Three Lists

Words	DOLCH	FITZGERALD	Horn	JOHNSON	RINSLAND
a	X		X		X
after	X		X		X
all	X		X		X
any	X		X		X
around	X			X	X
as	X		X		X
at	X		X		X
be	X		X		X
but	X		X		X
by	X		X		X
came	X			X	X
children		X		X	X
come	X	X			X
coming		X		X	X
could	X		X		X
day		X	X		X
did	X		X		X
didn't		X		X	X
do	X		X		X
don't	X	X			X
down	X	X			X
friend		X		X	X
get	X		X		X
getting		X		X	X
go	X		X		X
if	X		X		X
in	X		X		X
is	X		X		X
its	X			X	X
letter		X	X		X
many	X			X	X
morning		X		X	X
name		X		X	X
no	X		X		X
not	X		X		X
of	X		X		X
or	X		X		X

over	X		X		X
people		X		X	X
play	X	X			X
received		X	X	X	
right	X	X			X
saw	X	X			X
say	X		X		X
school		X		X	X
see	X		X		X
she	X		X		X
so	X		X		X
something		X		X	X
soon	X	X			X
that	X		X		X
thought		X		X	X
time		X		X	X
today	X	X			X
together	X	X		X	
until		X		X	X
up	X		X		X
us	X		X		X
want	X	X			X
what	X		X		X
where	X			X	X
which	X		X		X
white	X	X			X
work	X		X		X
write	X	X			X

TABLE 4
KINSEY'S 119 MOST COMMON WORDS

a	around	come	friend	he
about	as	coming	from	her
after	at	could	get	here
again	be	day	getting	him
all	before	did	go	his
am	but	didn't	good	how
an	by	do	got	I
and	came	don't	had	if
any	can	down	has	in
are	children	for	have	is
it	not	saw	think	were
its	now	say	thought	what
just	of	school	time	when
know	on	see	to	where
letter	one	she	today	which
like	or	so	together	white
made	our	some	two	will
make	out	something	until	with
many	over	soon	up	work
morning	people	that	us	would
much	play	the	very	write
my	please	them	want	you
name	received	there	we	your
no	right	they	well	